

The University of Chicago

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF
UNATTACHED PERSONS IN
AMERICAN CITIES

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY
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LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF UNATTACHED PERSONS*

ARNOLD M. ROSE
Washington University

SOCIAL problems receive differing degrees of attention from those who are affected by them and from the general public. The seriousness of the problem—measured either by the number of persons affected or by the degree of the need—is not necessarily an index of the amount of interest in the problem. This paper will describe a social problem—the inadequacy of housing for unattached persons—and suggest its degree of seriousness. This problem is not being given the degree of public or expert attention that would seem to be merited by

its seriousness, although the closely-related problem of housing for families is being given a large amount of public and expert attention. A companion article¹ will describe the variations in interest in the problem for the unattached and attempt to get at some of the reasons for the variations and the general lack of interest. By means of these two articles, we hope to demonstrate the lack of correlation between the existence of a social problem and the amount of interest in it.

In 1940 there were at least 12,285,000

¹ Entitled "Interest in the Living Arrangements of the Unattached."

* Manuscript received March 31, 1947.

unattached persons in the United States.² They constituted about 9.3 per cent of the total population, or about 14.2 per cent of the population 20 years of age and over. It is probable that there were many more unattached persons during the depths of the depression in the 1930's (when it was estimated that there were 1½ million homeless, mostly unattached),³ and in the midst of the war boom of the 1940's (when it was estimated that 30 to 50 per cent of those who migrated to boom cities were at least temporarily unattached).⁴ For the purposes of this paper, an unattached person will be regarded as one who does not have parents, collateral families, spouse, or children living with him and who has not joined an institution which incidentally provides living arrangements. Although this definition is occasionally unsatisfactory in deciding whether certain marginal persons are unattached or not, it is the one used because it is desired to examine the living arrangements of those persons in urban American society who do not live either as a member of a family or in an institutional home.

The existence of large numbers of unattached persons is a modern phenomenon, a consequence of the Industrial Revolution that came to England in the late 18th century and to the United States in the middle of the 19th century. The requirements of industry and the attractions of cities, as well as the relative inability of rural areas to support all the persons born in them, brought unprecedented numbers of single, young

people from farms to cities, and from small cities to large cities.⁵ Most of them ultimately got married, but for awhile they were unattached, and some never got married at all (almost 10 per cent of the population never gets married).⁶ A special type of these migrants were those who emigrated from Europe: beginning with the new immigration from southern and eastern Europe about 1880, the proportion of unattached immigrants rapidly rose until immigration was all but cut off by the first World War and the restrictive laws of 1921 and 1924.⁷ The Industrial Revolution also brought the business cycle and increased seasonal and casual employment.⁸ Since these had the social effect of reducing the marriage rate and breaking up families, they irregularly increased the number of unattached.⁹ There are other miscellaneous types of unattached whose numbers were relatively stable: the "homeless men," the temporarily unattached (including some travelling salesmen), and some prostitutes.

Although large numbers of unattached persons have been in American cities for almost a hundred years, few suitable living arrangements for the bulk of them have de-

⁵ John H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain* (Cambridge, England: University Press, 1926), esp. chapters 2 and 14. Adna F. Weber, *The Growth of Cities in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Columbia University, 1899), esp. chapters III-VI.

⁶ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population*, Vol. IV, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 17.

⁷ Marcus L. Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940), p. 150. Caroline F. Ware, "Immigration," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, VII (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1932), 587-594.

⁸ Karl Pribram, "Unemployment," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, XV (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1935), 147-162, (esp. pp. 147-148, 152).

⁹ Samuel A. Stouffer and Paul F. Lazarsfeld, *Research Memorandum on the Family in the Depression* (New York: Social Science Research Council, 1937), pp. 139-186. Robert C. Angell, *The Family Encounters the Depression* (New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1936). Ruth S. Cavan and Katherine H. Ranck, *The Family and the Depression* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938).

² This figure includes lodgers in private households, one-person families, members of quasi households (such as lodging houses and hotels), servants and hired hands living in private households. The figure is a minimum estimate because it does not include related persons living with families (no matter how remote the relationship), those who had no place of residence at all, transients who were unknown to their neighbors and thus were missed by the Census.

³ John N. Webb, *The Transient Unemployed* (Washington: Works Progress Administration, 1935), pp. 1-3, 12, 88-93.

⁴ Howard B. Myers, "Defense Migration and Labor Supply," *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 37 (March, 1942), 75.

veloped. The "Y's," the Eleanor Clubs, the Arlington Farms, and other organized residences built to meet their housing needs serve only a small proportion of the unattached. Most of the unattached live in what might be termed the cast-offs among residences: they live in rooming houses or lodging houses that have been converted from family residences; they live in spare rooms rented out in family homes. The problem can be conceived of as one of cultural lag. It would seem that society still considers the condition of being unattached as either a temporary or an unusual condition. This would help to explain the fact that few residence structures, with the exception of hotels that are usually too expensive for permanent residence, have been built to meet the special needs of the unattached, either by private capital or by the federal government. It has been shown, by the example of the Mills' Hotels in New York City, as well as by other lodging houses built about the same time in other cities, that even the cheap lodging house can be made adequate for the residents and profitable for the owners. But although the Mills' Hotels are over 40 years old, practically no other private capital has entered the field of building houses for the unattached poor, and not much more for those unattached who earn fairly good wages and salaries. There are some exceptions, of course, but apparently even most of these date back to pre-World War I days, and many have a philanthropic motive behind them. The federal government has, during the last fifteen years, concerned itself with clearing slums and providing adequate housing for the underprivileged, especially in cities. But, until the need for labor in war industries practically forced the government to start building dormitories in 1942, it paid no attention to the housing needs of the unattached in cities.¹⁰ This was true even

¹⁰ The federal government through C.C.C. camps and F.S.A. labor camps, did provide some very inexpensive barracks for certain types of unattached persons in rural areas during the 1930's. Also the government entered the housing field briefly during the first World War to build some temporary barracks for unattached war workers.

when the well-motivated slum-clearance projects drove lodgers out of family households and razed rooming houses. City planners and students of housing have tended to ignore the unattached in their studies and plans for the past 25 years.¹¹ All these facts suggest that there is a blind spot in the thinking of the experts as well as of the general public when it comes to the housing of the unattached.

The income of the average unattached person is half to two-thirds as large as that of the average whole family,¹² and if the indigent unattached were eliminated from consideration, and age of income earners held constant, this discrepancy would be even less. Further, since families always have more than one member, and usually not all the members are income-earning, the average family member has only a little over one-third the income available to him of the average unattached person (\$411 compared to \$1151 in 1935-36).¹³ Considering these facts, the income of the average unattached person could not be said to be so relatively low that he could not afford adequate housing.

At any given income level, the average unattached person spends a greater proportion of his income for housing than does the average family.¹⁴ The average urban tenant family paid a monthly rent of \$25.22 in 1940, while the average urban tenant person living by himself paid \$19.47.¹⁵ Considering what the unattached person got for his money, and the smaller number of his needs

¹¹ Unpublished manuscript by the author, "Interest in the Living Arrangements of the Unattached."

¹² National Resources Committee, *Consumer Incomes in the United States, Their Distribution in 1935-36* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1938), pp. 4, 18. U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940. Population and Housing, Families, Income and Rent* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1943), p. 9.

¹³ National Resources Committee, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 18.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

¹⁵ U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census, Population and Housing, op. cit.*, p. 9.

that could be satisfied by his housing (for example, he can seldom have food preparation, laundering, sociable amusement, minor recreation, carried on in his one room that families can have in their homes or apartments), the rent for unattached persons could be said to be relatively high. Available studies¹⁶ of rooming houses—taken as the currently single most important form of living arrangement for self-supporting unattached persons—show that the furniture in furnished rooms is often cheap and insufficient, the sanitary facilities are frequently outmoded and insufficient, the presence of vermin is frequent, the rooms are often not kept clean, there are seldom any common rooms or other facilities for the entertainment of guests. These facts make the relatively high rents for furnished rooms seem even higher. The greater turnover of population in furnished rooms also does not justify high rents, since vacancies are of shorter duration in furnished rooms than they are in unfurnished apartments for families, so that the vacancy rates per year are about the same.¹⁷ Alternative explanations do not seem to stand up therefore, and we are obliged to seek the conditioning factors of inadequate living arrangements for the unattached in lack of public and expert interest or knowledge.

The actual living arrangements for the unattached can best be considered under the

three historical types of unattached persons who made most use of them, the immigrants, the hoboes and other indigents, and the native-born, self-supporting migrants to cities. Unattached immigrants lived mainly as roomers and boarders in the homes of families of their own nationality. Other living arrangements developed logically out of this: The boarding boss system was one in which a single man or a couple took in boarders as a business. The cooperative non-family group was one in which a number of unattached persons got together to rent a house or apartment, buy furniture and hire a housekeeper (or sometimes do their housekeeping themselves). The labor camp had a boarding boss system where the "boss" was an employee of the company rather than an independent entrepreneur. Mainly for immigrant women, there were charitable or semi-charitable boarding homes sponsored by religious, ethnic, or philanthropic groups. Immigrants also lived in regular lodging, boarding and rooming houses. There were grave inadequacies in all these types of living arrangements, the most important of which were extreme overcrowding, poor sanitary facilities and lack of cleanliness, invasion of the privacy of families, and lack of opportunity for recreation and social contact. After the laws restricting immigration were passed in the early 1920's, the number of foreign-born in the United States began to decline, and the proportion of unattached declined still more rapidly, so that their living arrangements are no longer a major problem. A similar problem exists today, however, for Negroes who have migrated from the rural South to the urban North.

The chief type of residence for unattached "homeless men" and the unemployed is the common lodging house. Although some of these call themselves "hotels" they are very cheap, and are the poorest form of living arrangements for the unattached. Most of them can be classified under one of three types: the room-type lodging house (where several beds are put in a single room, which is otherwise like a room in a rooming house), the cell-type lodging house (where each

¹⁶ See, for example: (1) Community Service Society, "Life in One Room," mimeographed report by the Committee on Housing, Community Service Society (New York, 1940). (2) Information Bureau on Women's Work, Toledo, *Rooms, Inquire Within* (Toledo, Ohio: 1927). (3) James Ford, *Slums and Housing* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936). (4) Edith Abbott, *The Tenements of Chicago: 1908-1935* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936). Many other sources, most of them written before World War I, are available on the characteristics of rooming houses.

¹⁷ Chicago Plan Commission and Work Projects Administration, *Residential Chicago*, Vol. I of the *Chicago Land Use Survey* (Chicago Plan Commission, 1942), pp. 232-234. Although these data were not published until 1942, they were collected in 1938—before the war housing shortage.

lodger has his own small cell, very scantily furnished and not separated at their tops from similar cubicles), the "flophouse" (which is usually simply a bare room where lodgers sleep on boards, sometimes covered with thin mattresses and sometimes with piles of rags or newspapers). In addition to the common commercial lodging house, there are the model lodging houses built by philanthropists (the Mills' Hotels, for example), the missions sponsored by religious groups, and municipal lodging houses built by cities for men and women who are completely without funds. These indigent persons devise all sorts of other living quarters for themselves: they sleep in taverns, in all-night movies and restaurants, in police stations, on park benches, in doorways and hallways, in vacant lots and abandoned buildings. During the depression of the 1930's, they even built whole villages, commonly called "Shantytowns," for themselves in public grounds. Among the unemployed during the depression, families were better off than unattached persons, since they were less often evicted and more often supported in their homes by relief payments.

Single young people who came from rural areas to cities to earn their living and make their fortunes in expanding commerce and industry at first lived in boarding houses. These were usually quite adequate to satisfy the social and recreational needs of a home for the unattached as well as their physical needs (for a place to sleep, eat and do laundering). But these did not have enough flexibility with respect to time for eating and coming home at night, and did not have enough privacy, to be popular. When the restaurant and the rooming house came into existence, the boarding house declined, until by the year 1900 they were very few in number in large cities.

Living in rooming houses, or as a roomer in a family home, is now the most popular form of living arrangement for unattached persons. Most of the available evidence indicates that rents in rooming houses are high for the services rendered, and that furniture and other facilities tend to be inadequate.

The unattached person who comes from a given social level or who has a given income sinks a step or two in the quality of furniture he uses when he lives in a rooming house rather than in a family home. The roomer in a family home, on the other hand, has as wide a variety of quality in his living quarters as families do, since families of all income levels—except at the very top—take in roomers.

The organized boarding home and the residence club also exhibit a wide variety as far as their quality is concerned, but they are non-profit making and sometimes even partially supported by philanthropic groups so that their rents are not high in comparison to what the renter receives. They have also become more popular in recent decades, since their restrictions have been reduced and since some of them have eliminated the practice of charging for meals whether they are taken or not. Such homes are not numerous, relative to other forms of living arrangements, and the number of rooms in them has not kept pace with the increasing demand. It requires a fairly large accumulation of capital to build and maintain an organized boarding home or residence club.

Insofar as private capital has gone into providing housing for the unattached, it has gone into the building of hotels. Hotels are not for the unattached alone, of course, but cater in large measure to transients and moderately well-to-do families. Hotels provide a fairly satisfactory living arrangement for high salaried unattached persons, but they are too expensive as a permanent residence for the bulk of the unattached. A development of the last several decades, which combines some of the desirable features of both the hotel and the family home, is the apartment hotel. Is it used by unattached persons as well as by families. The apartment hotel also tends to be expensive and sometimes requires a high initial outlay of money for furniture and other household essentials.

The rooming house and the lodging house, which together provide housing for a very large proportion of unattached persons, are

usually converted structures.¹⁸ That is, they were originally constructed to serve functions other than those which they are now serving. Few, if any, buildings are built with the intention of making rooming houses out of them. Thus, rooming houses tend to be old buildings, and not always suited for their purpose. Their sanitary facilities are old-fashioned and perhaps worn out. The rooms are not spaced properly for individual living. There may be no fire exit, and if there is one it is likely to be through someone's private room, which is usually kept locked. In various other ways, the rooming house in a converted structure is an undesirable place to live.

The most rapidly growing cities, region of country held constant, are the ones which have the largest proportions of unattached. Rapidly growing cities have many advantages, but their housing facilities probably tend to be insufficient in number. The areas within a city in which the unattached can find furnished rooms tend to be the poorest ones. They are areas from which upper and middle class families have moved, and which industry and commerce are invading. Or they are along noisy arteries of transportation. The areas of Chicago in which the unattached are concentrated have been found by correlation,¹⁹ to be areas of economic blight, of

¹⁸ The rank-order correlation, for the community areas of Chicago, between the proportion of units in converted structures and the proportion of roomers in the population is + .69.

¹⁹ Coefficients of rank-order correlation, for the community areas of Chicago, have been worked out between each of the indicated characteristics and the proportion of roomers in the population. The data have been taken from a variety of sources: (1) Chicago Plan Commission and Work Projects Administration, *Residential Chicago*, Vol. I of the *Chicago Land Use Survey* (Chicago, 1942); (2) Arthur J. Todd et al, *The Chicago Recreation Survey, 1937* (Chicago: The Chicago Recreation Commission, 1937); (3) U. S. Bureau of the Census, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940, Population and Housing: Chicago, Ill.* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1942); (4) Chicago Department of Health, *Health Data Book* (Chicago: Dept. of Health, 1939), pp. 85-86; (5) R. E. L. Faris and H. W. Dunham, *Mental Disorders in Urban Areas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938), Appendix B.

commercial and industrial invasion, of old structures in poor condition, of dwelling units lacking such facilities as inside bathrooms and central heat, of overcrowded residences owned by absentee landlords. These areas also have well-defined social characteristics: relatively few children in the population, a high sex ratio, proximity to red light districts, high venereal disease rate, high schizophrenia rate. Thus, the areas are characterized by a high degree of social disorganization to which the unattached contribute after they have been there a while. They have two main advantages for the residents: (1) They tend to be near most of the places of work. (2) They tend to be near the centers of amusement,²⁰ and have characteristic service institutions which especially cater to the needs of the unattached.

World War II increased the disadvantages of unattached living. The pressure on living quarters for the unattached increased so markedly that they were living in all the odd corners that unemployed men found for themselves during the depression of the previous decade.²¹ The federal government belatedly went into the field of building housing for the unattached 15 months after it began on war housing for families.²² But the dormitories were insufficient in number,²³ and generally not nearly as adequate as the war housing built for families. Private owners of furnished rooms raised rents markedly for the unattached, despite O.P.A. price ceilings because the O.P.A. could not adequately

²⁰ The rooming house areas in Chicago (1937) have a disproportionately large number of liquor establishments, billiard halls, cabarets, penny arcades, movie theatres. They have a low number of bowling alleys and dance halls.

²¹ Lyonel C. Florant, "The Impact of the War on the Norfolk Negro Community," (Unpublished manuscript, Richmond: Population Study, Virginia State Planning Board, May 26, 1942). Mary Skinner and Alice S. Nutt, "Adolescents Away from Home," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 236 (November, 1944), 51-59.

²² The Defense Housing Act of October 14, 1940, as amended January 21, 1942.

²³ Unpublished statistics made available through the courtesy of Miss Corienne K. Robinson, National Housing Agency, Federal Public Housing Authority (Letter, August 28, 1942).

police the large number of furnished rooms and because the new rooms or "improved" rooms put on the market were not subject to O.P.A. control for their initial pricing. The O.P.A. even hurt the unattached as far as hotel rooms were concerned, because hotels found it more profitable to charge daily rates rather than weekly rates and so forced their guests to move every 5 days. This situation continues after the war, but, of course, there is an acute shortage of housing for families also.

The over-all picture, then, is one of inadequate living arrangements for the great bulk of the unattached population in American cities. There has been little interest, either on the part of private capital or on the part of the general public (as manifested through government) in remedying the situation. It is not mainly a matter of charity, since most of the unattached have relatively more money than do family heads to spend upon their living quarters. It is largely a matter of getting either government action or of getting private capital together to finance large projects. The new projects can be modeled after the existing residence clubs, if the aim is to provide adequate living arrangements to meet the needs and desires of the unattached. The various occupational groups will need somewhat different facilities.

The very poor among the unattached need housing badly also. It is questionable whether private enterprise would find it profitable to build for this group, although the Mills' Hotels and other philanthropy-sponsored lodging houses built around the turn of the century made regular profits. Today, because of increased building costs and higher land values, housing for hoboes and the unemployed would probably have to be a matter for philanthropic or government support. New building would not be necessary if remodeling went along with conversion of older buildings. It might be that some social service functions should be given along with board and lodging for indigents, in order to increase their capacity for self-support.

Some of the unattached persons themselves will continue to prefer to live in rooming houses, lodging houses, or one of the other forms of living arrangements now predominant. There are aspects of privacy, anonymity, cheapness, about some of these places which they prefer, and certainly no one should try to force them to live elsewhere. But the United States can do what Great Britain had accomplished by the 1920's—give these places a continual and thorough inspection, and require them to meet certain minimum standards of cleanliness and completeness.

INTEREST IN THE LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
OF THE URBAN UNATTACHED¹

ARNOLD M. ROSE

ABSTRACT

A historical study of expert and lay interest in and attention to a social problem leads to the hypothesis that a felt need on the part of a significant proportion of the population does not necessarily give rise to collective interest in meeting it. The need for adequate living arrangements for unattached people in cities, including their requirements for housing and also for eating, recreation, and clothing care, is studied as it is expressed in investigations, pamphlets, newspaper stories, laws, actual building projects. A secondary hypothesis is that interest in a problem is a major factor in its solution.

In a study of the living arrangements of unattached persons in American cities it was found that most of the housing for such persons consisted of castoffs of family residences (for example, rooming-houses and lodging-houses in converted homes, extra rooms in family homes) and that few structures were built specifically to house the unattached.² After examination of alternative hypotheses and rejection of them as inadequate, the proposition was reached that unsatisfactory living arrangements for the unattached were linked with the relative lack of public or expert *interest* in the problem. The study then shifted to the manifestations of interest in the housing of the unattached, which is the subject of the present paper. While most of the data are historical, the purpose is not to write history but to see how this interest varied and what was the effect on housing of this variation in interest. The study of group interest and attention as social causes is not novel, of course, but the relative importance of the factor of public interest for the problem under consideration makes an examination of it especially significant for the following reasons: (1) It will help to explain why the problem exists and has taken the form it has taken. (2) It will provide the equivalent of a trend line

from which the future of the problem can be predicted by extrapolation. (3) It might be of interest, for comparison's sake, to students of the etiology of other social problems.

The data are of two sorts: (1) concrete manifestations of public interest in the form of building living quarters designed specifically for the unattached (whether publicly or privately owned), the passage of laws regulating the conditions of existing housing, and other specific measures to improve the living conditions of the unattached; and (2) manifestations of intellectual interest in the form of studies or propagandistic tracts. Exclusive of newspaper reports of the last five years, approximately three hundred and sixty items have been collected by means of scouring the relevant headings in the card catalogues of the New York Public Library, the Library of Congress, the Widener Library at Harvard University, the Princeton University Library, the Baker Library of Dartmouth College, the Columbia University Library, and the Harper Library of the University of Chicago. Some of the items will be merely listed or summarized; others will be discussed at greater length. The data presented will be far from complete because much, perhaps most, were local in purpose and origin and never became available at centrally located libraries. No effort will be made to present the data statistically, partly because of this incompleteness, partly because there is no known way of measuring manifestations of interest. One item is some-

¹ The author is greatly indebted to Dr. Louis Wirth for his critical reading of and wise suggestions for this paper.

² Arnold M. Rose, "Living Arrangements of Unattached Persons in American Cities," *American Sociological Review*, XII (August, 1947), 429-35.

times as important as twenty or more others. Attention will be focused on American cities, although some background description will be given for contrast, for British cities.

BEFORE 1890

The first type of residence designed largely for the unattached was the hotel. There were gradually improved successors of the medieval inn up through the turn of the nineteenth century, but most writers date the beginning of modern American hotel history with the opening of the Tremont in Boston in 1829.³ The Tremont's innovations were magnificence, public rooms, separation of bar and lobby, locks on the doors, and running water in each room. The Tremont was also the first hotel to have special facilities for accommodating permanent guests. Other hotels at this time had scantily furnished rooms and none of the above-mentioned things. For example, Willard's Hotel and the National Hotel in Washington, D.C., were described by a contemporary observer in the late 1850's as being "two huge rambling barracks where some incredible number of beds could be run up."⁴ It was not until the 1850's that hotel rooms had private baths.

The first type of residence for the unattached that had a semiphilanthropic motive behind its construction was the seaman's lodging-house. Several port cities had these in the early decades of the nineteenth century.⁵ The noncharitable lodging-house and boarding-house antedated the seaman's homes, and the latter were modeled on the former.

All through the nineteenth century the supply of rooms in hotels, lodging-houses, and boarding-houses failed to keep pace

with the growing demand. Consequently there was a deterioration in the quality of these places, except in the most expensive hotels, and there grew up the practice of charging high rates for crowded accommodations. Attempts to improve living arrangements for the unattached were begun in Great Britain several decades before they were begun in the United States. In 1844-45, after considerable agitation led by Lord Shaftesbury, there was the first of a long series of royal commissions which investigated lodging-houses as well as other urban conditions. By 1841 there was an Edinburgh Lodging House Association for Providing Lodgings for the Working Classes, which was distributing leaflets requesting the recipients to attend a meeting to organize a model lodging-house. In the same decade London, Leeds, and Glasgow organized similar societies.⁶ Lord Shaftesbury organized the society in London (the Labourers' Friendly Society, later called the Society for Improving the Condition of the Labouring Classes), and the Prince Consort himself was president of it shortly after.⁷ This society established two model lodging-houses, in 1847 and 1849, for 82 and 54 persons apiece. According to the return for 1863, one of these made a profit of 12½ per cent and the other 8½ per cent per year.⁸ Many more such houses were started in London in the early 1850's. In Leeds some common lodging-houses were remodeled by the local society, and the result was equally successful.⁹ In 1851 Henry Mayhew published his *London*

⁶ James Hole, *The Homes of the Working Classes, with Suggestions for Their Improvement* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1866), pp. 51-54.

⁷ John J. Clarke, *The Housing Problem: Its History, Growth, Legislation and Procedure* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, 1920), p. 5.

⁸ Hole, *op. cit.*, p. 51. The appeal to the profit motive was stressed in the early propaganda for improved lodging-houses (see, e.g., Richard Heathfield, "Model Lodging Houses [An Essay by a Noted Economist]," in *Contributions to the "Postulates and Data"* [London: Longmans, Brown, Green & Longmans, 1853]).

⁹ W. B. Denison, *Meliora, or Better Times To Come* (London: Parker & Co., 1852).

³ See, e.g., Jefferson Williamson, *The American Hotel* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1930); Norman S. Hayner, *Hotel Life* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1936), pp. 11 ff.; Edgar W. Martin, *The Standard of Living in 1860* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1942), p. 149.

⁴ Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 157.

⁵ The Seaman's Friend Society, *The Glasgow Meeting* (leaflet, May 13, 1822).

Labour and the London Poor, which contained a mine of information on the appalling conditions to be found in London's common lodging-houses. Public agitation induced Parliament to pass a law in 1851 providing for the inspection of common lodging-houses and a companion law which empowered town councils and other local government bodies in towns of more than ten thousand inhabitants to levy a tax for the establishment of lodging-houses. During the first two decades after the passage of the act, only one town—Huddersfield—took advantage of it. About 1875, however, there was a wave of building municipal lodging-houses in England.¹⁰ After the first law providing for the inspection and registration of common lodging-houses in 1851, there was a steady progression of such laws, each more extensive in scope and better enforced than the previous one. The law of 1890 included a provision that the Public Works Loan Commission could lend money at 4 per cent to any qualified private group that wished to build lodging-houses.¹¹

The tracts of the early propagandists contained descriptions of the poor conditions of the common lodging-houses, as did Mayhew's book. As early as 1855 there was a government report dealing exclusively with them.¹² This report also noted the beneficial effects of the inspections instituted by the law of 1851. In addition to the Society for Improving the Dwellings of the Labouring Classes, there were other philanthropic ventures afoot in London. Many of these were directed toward building dwellings for poor families (including a model tenement built by Prince Albert), but some of them consisted of establishing lodging-houses for the unattached.¹³

¹⁰ Mary Higgs, *Where Shall He Live?* (London: P. S. King & Son, Ltd., 1931), pp. 34-35.

¹¹ F. H. Millington, *The Housing of the Poor* (London: Cassell & Co., 1891), p. 28.

¹² George Glover (superintending medical inspector, General Board of Health), *Report on the Common and Model Lodging Houses of the Metropolis* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1855).

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 28.

The next great study of the lodging-houses was that of Charles Booth, as part of his great *Life and Labour of the People in London*.¹⁴ He found that there were exactly 1,000 common lodging-houses in Greater London in 1889 and that they had accommodations for 31,651 persons. He described the adequate houses and the superior boarding-houses as well as the run-down unsanitary types. He went into the social characteristics of the lodgers and noted the class divisions among them. Not long after Booth wrote, Walter Besant did a survey of East London, in which the lack of special quarters for visitors and for the unattached was noted.¹⁵

The British maintained a high level of interest in the unattached long after Booth wrote, and there were government investigations, laws,¹⁶ and movements to build model lodging-houses right into the 1930's. An official report in 1927 declared that the common lodging-houses of London were in good condition and that "outside of public institutions, it is doubtful whether anywhere among the poorer classes, even much higher in the social scale than the 'dosser' [tramp], there is to be found a standard of house cleanliness at all comparable with that of the licensed common lodging house."¹⁷

Interest in the United States lagged far behind that in Great Britain. There were a growing number of hotels, lodging-houses, and boarding-houses, but there was little public effort to control or improve them before 1890. Aside from the few seamen's homes, the most notable effort to provide

¹⁴ Vol. I, *East, Central and South London* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1892), esp. pp. 206 ff.

¹⁵ Walter Besant, *East London* (London: Chattoe & Windus, 1899).

¹⁶ For a summary of British laws relating to lodging-houses see Clarke, *op cit.*, esp. pp. 52-56.

¹⁷ London County Council, *Common Lodging-Houses and Kindred Institutions: Report by the Medical Officer of Health* (London: London County Council, 1927), p. 5. Another good description of the housing for the unattached in Britain during the 1920's is Clarke, *op cit.*, pp. 112-13.

homes for the unattached was that of the textile mills of New England. These factories were anxious to attract cheap female labor to new factories in the open country, and the only way to do it in early Victorian days was to provide strictly controlled boarding-houses. Such houses were very successful in attracting the girls, for occasionally even girls from upperclass homes came to work. The houses were well kept, and the food was good. But the company boarding-houses soon proved to be unpopular with the girls who lived in them, because they controlled all aspects of the girls' lives and because the girls were forced to buy all their needs in a company store, which often overcharged and falsified accounts.¹⁸ However, there continued to be isolated experiments in company boarding-houses all over the country.

There were no model or municipal lodging-houses in the United States before 1890. There were a few Y.M.C.A. and Y.W.C.A. hotels and some immigrant homes. Apparently New York City was the only city to have a law providing for the regulation of lodging-houses. This was passed in 1867 and was not very well enforced. Only a few scattered articles had appeared, and these dealt with the problem of the seasonal worker and the hobo. The point of view was that the hobo was a vagrant—a petty criminal—for whom some penal treatment or other cure should be devised.

1890 TO 1915

The generation between 1890 and 1915 saw the highest degree of interest in living arrangements for the unattached that the United States has ever known. The explanation of this interest lies deeper among the roots of the national ethos than any historian has yet laid bare: The period was one of heightened national awareness about all sorts of social problems, from the wickedness

of uncontrolled drinking through the corruption of city governments to the wobbly structure of the American currency system.

It is impossible here to go more thoroughly into the causation of this social upheaval in the United States. Suffice it to say that the sudden reawakening of interest in the living conditions of the unattached was only a tiny part of a great shift in public consciousness. There were a few unique causes, aside from this larger shift, for the new interest in the special problem we are considering. One was the railroad companies' annoyance over the increased use of their empty freight cars by tramps and hoboes. A second was the lack of quarters for the great hordes of visitors to the world's fairs at Chicago (1893) and St. Louis (1904). A third cause was the tendency among the new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe for the men to come first by themselves and live as unattached roomers or boarders for several years before they brought their women over. Another unique cause for the concern over the living arrangements of the unattached was the new openings for women in industry and commerce and the fact that women in large numbers had to live by themselves to take these jobs. Still another cause for this interest was the white-slaving of immigrant women and the occasional fires that broke out in old rooming-houses and received newspaper publicity.

Public interest in the lodgings of the unemployed, the seasonal worker, and the hobo was perhaps almost as great as that in the housing of any other social group. The first municipal lodging-house in the United States was that opened in 1896 in New York City. By 1902 there were also municipal lodging-houses in Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Washington, New Haven, and Syracuse.¹⁹ Also a great variety of charitable and model lodging-houses were opened in the two decades between 1890 and 1910—including the bulk of those that are in

¹⁸ John Ihlder, "Better Living Conditions for Employees and Their Relation to Stability in Employment," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, XLIX (January, 1917), 58-65.

¹⁹ Charles Zueblin, *American Municipal Progress* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1902), p. 102.

existence today. For instance, the Industrial Christian Alliance opened a house in 1891, "its object being to provide a temporary home for homeless and often sick and famishing men, where they can be fed, washed, clothed, employed and brought under Christian influences until they are physically able to work, thereby enabling them to suitably fill situations."²⁰ Some were charitable without a religious motivation, as, for example, the Working Men's Home and Medical Mission in Chicago which was maintained by "friends of Battle Creek Sanitarium, Battle Creek, Michigan, at an expense of over \$1,000 a month, and without asking or receiving any help from Chicago people."²¹ It did, however, charge 10 cents a night to each resident. This was also the period when the first Mills Hotel was opened in New York City, and it was heralded throughout the country as a profitable business venture rather than as a means of dispensing charity. Businessmen, as well as philanthropists and social workers, discussed the Mills Plan.²²

The supervision and control of the common lodging-houses began to get under way in the 1890's. New York City had had a statute on its books since 1867 providing for the inspection of lodging-houses, but apparently it was not until 1897 that policemen began to make regular night inspections.²³ These inspections did not accomplish all they were intended to, since lodgers in overcrowded houses hid on the fire escapes; and even if a violation of the law was discovered, the fine was small compared to the lodgers' rent. Around 1902 the nightly

inspections ceased.²⁴ Boston had similar inspections, and even lower penalties, but fairly good enforcement.²⁵ Philadelphia also succeeded in enforcing relatively good standards after 1895. Chicago instituted inspection of lodging-houses during the fair of 1893, but it immediately abandoned it after the fair and did not begin again until after the ordinance was passed in 1899 to reduce colonization of transients in lodging-houses for purposes of having them vote. Other large cities—including Baltimore, Cleveland, St. Louis, Denver, San Francisco, St. Paul, New Orleans—made no effort to control lodging-houses.²⁶

American periodicals began to contain articles about the provisions for housing unattached persons in other countries. What European countries had accomplished was paraded before American eyes with the intention of creating a sense of shame for American backwardness.²⁷ A missionary to Japan described a home for factory girls in that country and incidentally asked his good Christian readers to contribute funds for its upkeep.²⁸ There were some popularized descriptions of bad living conditions for the unattached in this country.²⁹ A few of the more advanced localities began to make detailed reports on housing conditions, including those for the unattached, to government executives and legislatures.³⁰ Even news-

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ John Lloyd Thomas, "Workingmen's Hotels," *Municipal Affairs*, III (1899), 72-94.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ See, e.g., Harriet Fayes, "Housing of Single Women," *Municipal Affairs*, III (1899), 95-107.

²⁸ Sidney L. Gulick, "A Sociological Experiment among Factory Girls: A Report of the Matsuyama Factory Girls' Home" (mimeographed; Matsuyama, Japan, 1907).

²⁹ See, e.g., Sanborn A. F. Moody, *Lodging House and Other Tenement Sketches* (Boston: Copeland & Day, 1895); Charlotte Rumbold, *Housing Conditions in St. Louis: Report of the Housing Committee of the Civic League of St. Louis* (1908).

³⁰ See, e.g., *Report of the Tenement House Committee, as Authorized by Chapter 479 of the Laws of 1894* (of New York State) (Albany: State Printer, 1895);

²⁰ Industrial Christian Alliance, *Helping Men To Help Themselves* (pamphlet; New York, 1903), no pagination.

²¹ Leaflet put out by the Home (1904).

²² See, e.g., the critical article in the *Chicago Tribune* for December 12, 1899, by J. Vernon Calkins. Also see the volumes of *Charities and Corrections* and other social service periodicals and reports of conventions of that time.

²³ Lawrence Veiller, "Room Overcrowding and the Lodger Evil," *Housing Problems in America, Proceedings of the National Conference on Housing* (New York, 1912), pp. 64-67.

papers took up the propaganda.³¹ The social workers and other private scientific students also made their studies³² and carried on discussions.³³ The two outstanding doctoral theses in the field of living arrangements for the unattached were completed in 1906 and 1912, respectively.³⁴ Toward the end of the period we are discussing there was a plethora of studies of the living arrangements of the immigrants and much discussion of the "lodger evil." At least one outstanding student of housing in the United States attributed the major problem of overcrowding to the taking of lodgers.³⁵ Harvard University had a housing exhibit at its Social Museum in 1911, and at this exhibit were descriptions of model lodging-houses in Austria, France, Great Britain, and New York City.³⁶

Various associations were formed during the period under consideration, and in so far as there are associations today which

Bridgeport Housing Association, *A Brief Survey of Housing Conditions in Bridgeport, Connecticut* (1914).

³¹ See, e.g., Galveston-Dallas News, *The Housing Problem in Texas* (pamphlet reprinted from a series of newspaper articles, November-December, 1911), 96 pp.

³² See, e.g., Ernest Ludlow Bogart, *The Housing of the Working People in Yonkers* ("American Economic Association Economic Studies," Vol. III, No. 5, 1898), pp. 273-348; Esther Packard, *A Study of Living Conditions of Self-supporting Women in New York City* (New York: Metropolitan Board of the Y. W. C. A., 1915).

³³ See, e.g., Raymond Robins, "What Constitutes a Model Lodging House," *Proceedings of the National Conference of Charities and Corrections, Thirty-first Annual Session* (New York, 1904), pp. 155-66.

³⁴ Albert B. Wolfe, *The Lodging House Problem in Boston* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin & Co., 1906). Franklin K. Fretz, "The Furnished Room Problem in Philadelphia" (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 1912).

³⁵ Veiller, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-70. Veiller goes on to say: "We must not only make impossible by law the taking of lodgers into the family life, but we must recognize that there is need of some place in which the large numbers of single men . . . can be cheaply lodged" (*ibid.*, p. 75).

concern themselves with the housing of the unattached, they were organized during that period. There are, for example, the Association To Promote Proper Housing for Girls in New York City, the Octavia Hill Association of Philadelphia, and the Consumers' League of Cincinnati. Similar to these organizations were the room registries that were begun as a public service in practically all cities. Not only did they serve to provide partially adequate rooms for unattached persons just arrived in the city, but they served as a check on the quality of the rooming-houses where official inspection lagged. By refusing to register a room that did not meet their standards, the room registries sometimes forced the landlords to improve the room. Being organizations of civic-minded citizens, they could also bring to public notice a house which they regarded as substandard. Perhaps the best registries were those organized by the Y.M.C.A., the Y.W.C.A., and women's clubs, but there were also good ones organized by colleges, churches, and department stores.³⁷ Room registries grew ineffective when there was a housing shortage and sometimes when the civic-minded citizens left the registry in the hands of paid employees.

The period between 1890 and 1915 saw the springing-up of organized boarding-homes, especially for women. In 1915 there were 54 organized, nonprofit boarding-houses for women in New York City, exclusive of those run for immigrants only and for special types of girls (such as delinquents and unmarried mothers).³⁸ Each house accommodated between 11 and 328 self-supporting women and girls. They imposed unpopular restrictions on the girls; most of them had a nightly curfew; only a

³⁶ James Ford, *The Housing Problem: A Summary of Conditions and Remedies Prepared To Accompany the Housing Exhibit in May, 1911, of the Harvard Social Museum* (pamphlet; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1911).

³⁷ Ann Trotter, *Housing of Non-family Women in Chicago* (Chicago: Chicago Community Trust, 1921), p. 22.

³⁸ Packard, *op. cit.*

few had extra rooms for the entertainment of guests; meals had to be paid for whether they were taken or not; there was no choice of food. Worst of all was the air of charity that apparently marked all these homes. The Eleanor Clubs, while they were more expensive, were also more popular because they were completely self-supporting and imposed fewer restrictions. In 1915 there were six Eleanor Clubs in Chicago, each housing between 60 and 150 girls.³⁹ Including these six Eleanor Clubs, Chicago had 34 organized boarding-homes for self-supporting women in 1914, each of which housed between 7 and 375 women.⁴⁰

THE FIRST WORLD WAR AND THE 1920'S

The war shifted public interest away from the housing problem and, indeed, away from social reforms generally. As far as the unattached were concerned, there was less need to be concerned over their pre-war housing problems. The industrial boom reduced the number of unemployed and homeless men to an inconsequential number. The wartime restrictions on immigration reduced the number of immigrants who had created the "lodger evil," and America was preparing to restrict immigration permanently after the war. The war caused a heavy migration of Negroes from the rural South to the urban North, but only a few whites cared how the Negroes were living in their new homes. The only major group left to be concerned with was the youth migrating from farm and small city to the centers of war industry; it was essential to the conduct of the war that housing be secured for them. Hence the room registries grew in number and activity. Housewives did their patriotic duty and took in roomers. The United States Housing Corporation was set up to construct new housing in war-industry centers, and it constructed more units for single persons than

it did for families.⁴¹ (It is of interest, however, that permanent houses were constructed for families but usually only temporary barracks for the unattached.) The Housing Division of the Emergency Fleet Corporation was another government agency that built houses for war workers. The war, in sum, toned down the discussion but provided the action for securing dwelling units for the unattached where they were most needed. The interest, however, was not in the unattached themselves or in their housing but in meeting war needs. After the war was over, public interest in providing adequate living arrangements for the unattached gradually went down almost to the low level it had before 1890.

The housing shortage remained after the war. Business firms were reported as considering establishing boarding-homes for their unattached workers.⁴² But a survey of housing by employers in 1920 showed that only .3 of 1 per cent of the 51,473 dwelling units built by employers for their employees were one-room units.⁴³ Some employers did keep room registries. A few of the higher-salaried unattached persons organized co-operative apartment houses. Privately owned profit-making apartment hotels increased tremendously in numbers during the 1920's and satisfied the housing needs of many of the higher-salaried. The organized boarding-homes reduced their restrictions, smacked less of charity, and grew tremendously popular.⁴⁴ Some of them dropped the word "home" in their titles and called themselves "residence clubs." There were other symptomatic changes in terminology: "inmates" became "residents" and "matrons"

⁴¹ United-States Department of Labor, *Report of the United States Housing Corporation* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1919), II, 380-87.

⁴² Trotter, *op. cit.*, p. 28.

⁴³ Leifur Magnusson, *Housing by Employers in the United States: Report of the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1920), pp. 43-44.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 15, 28. Also see Bureau of Social Hygiene, New York City, *Housing Conditions of Employed Women in Manhattan* (New York, 1922), p. 7.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴⁰ Essie Davidson, "Organized Boarding Homes for Self-supporting Women in Chicago" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Chicago, 1914).

were succeeded by "superintendents," "house secretaries," or "directors."⁴⁵

Some of the organizations that had been started before the war took on new functions. For instance, the Association To Promote Proper Housing for Girls in New York City, which had begun in 1913 as little more than a room registry, had during the war also begun to serve older women and had started three girls' clubhouses (which sponsored parties, a library, sales, teas, dances, bridge games, and loans to members). In 1921 it collaborated with five other organizations in setting up a Thrift Shop to sell secondhand goods to working girls.

In 1923 a Committee on Homeless Men, organized by the Council of Social Agencies of Chicago, made a series of recommendations—based on Nels Anderson's study, *The Hobo*⁴⁶ (published in that year)—which included a suggestion that the city support an enlarged lodging-house, to which would be attached a laundry, an information bureau, a vocational clinic, and a social service bureau. These facilities would serve men who could pay a few cents for a night's lodging as well as those who were completely destitute. This committee succeeded in reopening the Municipal Lodging House which had been closed since 1917.

The period immediately following the war was, therefore, one of a continuation and expansion of housing facilities and related activities that had begun before and during the war. Public inspection of rooming- and lodging-houses remained haphazard without protest, and such activities as room registries became institutionalized and professionalized. The most important change was that there were few new evidences of interest in the living arrangements of the unattached. It is significant that one of the best books on housing to be published immediately after the war, Edith Elmer Wood's *The Housing of the Unskilled Wage*

Earners: America's Next Problem,⁴⁷ contained no mention of the housing problems of the unattached. It would be out of place to undertake an explanation of this decline in public interest here, but suffice it to say that there was a general decline of public interest in social problems during the 1920's and that the nature of the housing problem for the unattached had changed. The immigrant lodgers, who were the prime concern of the social workers and the publicists before the war, practically ceased coming into the country, and the ones already in the country gradually acquired their own houses or were ignored. The prosperity of the 1920's kept the number of homeless men at their wartime lows. The municipal lodging-houses were not crowded, and the men in them were the sort who did not attract public sympathy. The demand for furnished rooms remained as great as, or greater than, before, however, since young people came to cities in ever increasing numbers, and families began to live in furnished rooms in significant proportion also. Profit-making rooming-houses, organized by entrepreneurs rather than by landladies, met the increased demand. The organized boarding-houses and residence clubs failed to increase in proportion to the need for them.

BEFORE AND DURING WORLD WAR II

During the 1930's the chief concern of the nation in housing shifted to slum housing (for families), but there was considerable concern over the shantytowns that the homeless unattached were being forced to resort to. Many cities took over unused warehouses or storerooms and turned them into makeshift shelters for the homeless. When the federal government entered the housing field by making loans to private builders and by building low-cost projects, it completely ignored the housing needs of the unattached. When a slum was cleared and handsome low-cost housing was put in its place, the families that formerly lived in the area were welcomed back—but they were not allowed to bring their roomers

⁴⁵ The Y.W.C.A.'s, for example, adopted such changes of terminology (see Mary S. Sims, *The First Twenty-five Years* [New York: Woman's Press, 1932], p. 15).

⁴⁶ Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁷ New York: Macmillan Co., 1919.

with them. When a rooming-house was razed during one of these slum-clearance projects, it was never replaced. The federal government's efforts to beautify cities and provide more healthful surroundings for their families made it harder and harder for a single person to find a room. The C.C.C. and the F.S.A. labor camps were the federal government's sole contribution to the unattached.

Except for the newspaper and magazine stories about the shantytowns, there is a singular lack of popular literature on the housing of the unattached during the 1930's, just as during the 1920's.⁴⁸ There were many excellent studies, reports, outlines, discussions of housing problems in the United States—whole organizations came into existence to take up the fight for better housing—but hardly any of them bothered to mention the needs of the unattached, much less to analyze them or to organize to act for them. Even housing for Negroes—a minority group whose needs had hitherto been generally ignored—came in for a good deal of public discussion and a certain amount of remedy. As far as the housing experts were concerned, nobody lived outside a family during the 1930's. In view of the reawakening interest in social problems—including that of housing for families—during the New Deal era, this blind spot is hard to explain.

Some striking examples of this lack of interest will be given. The Housing Section of the Welfare Council of New York City prepared a mimeographed "Outline for a Housing Study Course" in 1938, which not only outlined a course but also made several practical suggestions and provided a bibliography. It contained absolutely nothing on the unattached. The Annual Reports of the

State Board of Housing of New York State were inspected for the years 1928-33: these otherwise excellent reports contained no mention of the problems of the unattached and indicated no service that the state might provide for them. Large-scale housing projects built with private capital never contained units especially adapted for the unattached, although in a few cases unattached persons took small-sized family apartments.⁴⁹ A pamphlet put out by the Philadelphia Housing Association in 1932 to summarize the housing situation in that city contained no reference to the housing of the unattached.⁵⁰ The article on "Housing in the United States" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, published in 1932, contains not one mention of housing for unattached persons, although it does summarize housing problems of and housing construction for families.⁵¹ When the Chicago Plan Commission set up its master-plan for residences in Chicago, it gave only a scornful reference to the deterioration caused by the presence of roomers in a neighborhood and paid no attention to the housing needs of the unattached in planning the Chicago of the future.⁵² The symposium of city planners published under the title "Building the Future

⁴⁹ A letter from Frank C. Lowe, resident manager of Parkchester, a residential community built by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in the Bronx, N.Y., states: "We have a very few apartments at Parkchester which are occupied by one person—possibly less than a dozen. In most cases the resident is an older person in retirement" (March 9, 1942). In 1940 Hillside Homes, a private housing project in the Bronx at the edge of Westchester, gave residence to 1,410 families and 14 unattached persons. Living with the families were 180 single adults, practically all close relatives (letter from manager, Hillside Homes, March 20, 1942).

⁵⁰ Bernard J. Newman, *Housing in Philadelphia, 1932* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Housing Association, 1933).

⁵¹ Edith Elmer Wood, "Housing, United States," *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, VII (New York: Macmillan Co., 1932), 511-17. It is interesting to note that this article describes the family homes built by the federal government during World War I but ignores the dormitories built.

⁵² Chicago Plan Commission, *Master Plan of Residential Land Use of Chicago* (Chicago, 1943).

⁴⁸ The homeless unattached were an exception: Following a social service interest, there have been some excellent studies of homeless men during the 1930's as well as during the 1920's. These include studies by Anderson and by Sutherland and Locke. Theses prepared at schools of social service administration, government studies, and reports by congressional committees also provided much information about homeless men.

City" in the *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (November, 1945) contained no reference to the housing of the unattached among all its papers. While the government was belatedly forced to build dormitories during World War II to relieve the shortage of furnished rooms for unattached war workers, in early 1941 the Assistant Co-ordinator of Defense Housing wrote a paper on housing problems and policies showing a complete lack of comprehension that a major type of housing needed in the eventuality of a war would be residences for the unattached. In fact, his sole reference to the problem reveals the attitude of housing experts of the pre-war period:

It seems clear that during 1941 from 150,000 to 200,000 new houses will be required for families coming into defense areas on military or civilian jobs directly connected with defense. In addition to defense housing, thus defined, there are separate problems of barracks, cantonments, and construction camps, which demand materials and labor in competition with housing.⁵³

While they were not prominent, there were some references in the pre-World War II literature to the housing of the unattached. Perhaps the best study ever to be done of the ordinary rooming-house was the mimeographed booklet put out in 1940 by the Community Service Society of New York City, "Life in One Room."⁵⁴ In 1936 Professor James Ford of Harvard University published his two-volume summary of housing conditions in New York City, *Slums*

⁵³ Jacob Crane, "Housing: Public and Private," in George B. Galloway & Associates, *Planning for America* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1941), p. 407.

⁵⁴ When this study was made in 1940, the reader's attention was called to the fact that "nobody knows how many people live in rooming houses in the City of New York. All kinds of estimates have been made over a period of many years, but at no time has accurate information been obtained which would show how large the problem is, nor how important is the part that the rooming house plays in providing housing in New York City" (Committee on Housing, Community Service Society, "Life in One Room" [mimeographed; New York: Community Service Society, 1940], pp. a-b).

and *Housing*,⁵⁵ and toward the end of the second volume was an excellent chapter on the conditions and needs of housing for the unattached. Whereas the professors of social work, especially those at the University of Chicago, had been among the prime movers in calling the public's and the experts' attention to the "lodger evil" and the "families in furnished rooms" in 1908-12, their work in the housing field lagged in subsequent decades. In 1936, however, Edith Abbott edited a book in which she and her colleagues reviewed the history of the tenement in Chicago between 1908 and 1935,⁵⁶ and in this book was a summary of the role of roomers living with private families. While the summary was excellent as a historical description, it contained the statement that lodgers were formerly thought to be primarily a problem of immigration but were now realized to be a problem of poverty.⁵⁷ In other words, there was a belated recognition that the unattached continued to exist even after immigration stopped, but even then the point of view to be taken toward them was that they were a consequence of a poor family's need to supplement its income. The concern was still directed almost exclusively to the families' problem.

During the 1920's and the 1930's the old organizations that had the solid backing and a well-thought-out program that had come over from an earlier day—organizations like the Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., and the Salvation Army—continued to do their work in providing housing for various types of unattached persons. Churches and other chari-

⁵⁵ James Ford, *Slums and Housing, with Special Reference to New York City: History, Conditions, Policy* (2 vols; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936). Ford realized the general lack of interest in housing for the unattached: "In their preoccupation with problems of tenement-house families, housing surveys have largely overlooked a problem of considerable dimensions—that of accommodations for single men and women" (*ibid.*, I, 337).

⁵⁶ Edith Abbott et al., *The Tenements of Chicago, 1908-1935* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936).

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 341-43.

table groups lent their efforts to providing for homeless men and women a place to sleep during the depression. Some of the room registries that had been created to meet the needs of the first World War had lasted through two decades to perform a similar service in the second World War.⁵⁸ While there was no noticeable increase in the number of organized boarding-homes, the old ones continued to function as they had for decades.

World War II saw a sudden revival of interest in housing for the unattached. About a half of the war workers that flowed into the war industry centers were unattached (some temporarily so), and if war needs for labor were to be met, these persons had to be housed. There were campaigns to get families to make available spare rooms. There was a spurt in the conversion of apartment buildings into rooming-houses. Even the federal government built housing projects for the unattached, such as Arlington Farms outside Washington, D.C. Yet the supply of dwelling units for the unattached failed to keep pace with the demand, much more so than was true in the case of families. Most of the new housing, constructed either by the government or by private capital, was designed for families. Even during the war, then, there was a *relative* lack of interest in housing for the unattached. The postwar era seems to be following the pre-war one in this respect: most of the current discussion about the housing needs for veterans assumes that the homeless veterans are married, whereas the majority of veterans are not married and many of the single veterans are unattached or want to be unattached. The fact that there is a real housing shortage for families will so absorb public interest that the housing needs of the unattached will probably be completely ignored.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Even the room registries in 1940 covered only a small proportion of the rooming-houses, and most of them did not list residence clubs at all. This was true, at least, in New York City (Committee on Housing, Community Service Society, *op cit.*, p. 102).

INTERPRETATION

The few times in American history when there has been public interest in the living arrangements of the unattached—shortly after the year 1900 and during the first and second world wars—indicate that there must be some public crisis before public attention is aroused in this problem. Either there must be a huge influx of the unattached with tremendous overcrowding of their living quarters, or there must be a war-time shortage of housing for unattached workers. Ordinarily, neither the public nor the experts concern themselves with the living arrangements of the unattached 14 per cent of the adult population. It is as if they were thought to be nonexistent, or at least entirely impoverished so that they could not expect anything by way of adequate housing. With few exceptions, neither private nor public capital has gone into the provision of housing adapted to the permanently unattached, and they have been forced—again with some exceptions—to live in “extra” rooms or cast-off family residences converted to rooming-houses or, for the poor, lodging-houses.

The lack of public interest—or the unawareness that there exists a permanent element of the self-supporting unattached in the population—has created the problem of living arrangements for this element. Because the end of the war has lessened the pressure to provide housing for war workers and because everyone is now concerned about the also serious shortage of housing for families, we may predict that once again the housing needs of the unattached will be all but completely ignored. Thus we see that a social problem can be created by lack of public and expert interest even if the social need giving rise to the problem is one of long standing and even if there is an economic basis for the solution of it.

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

⁵⁹ An exception occurs, and always has occurred, in the case of colleges, which have to be primarily concerned with the housing needs of unmarried students because they usually greatly outnumber the married students.

